

Tulou: An Urban Typology in Rural

Nestled within the lush landscapes of southern China, the Tulou (土楼) stands as a testament to the resilience and innovation of Hakka (客家) culture. These introverted earthen structures, crafted over 1000 years ago, narrate the tales of large families in search of refuge and community behind their thick, protective walls. Far surpassing just architectural wonders, Tulous stand as living organisms that embody individuality and communal life.

The term "Hakka," meaning "guest people" in Mandarin, contrasts with "主" (zhu), "owner,". The community underwent 5 significant migrations, starting Eastern Jin (400 AD), amid northern invasions. This turmoil prompted the Hakkas' ancestors to migrate from central China to regions like Hunan and Jiangxi due to the Jin dynasty's fall. A subsequent migration between Tang and Song dynasties' (900 AD), propelled by Chao Huang's rebellion, led them to areas including southern Anhui and parts of Fujian and Guangdong. Isolated for centuries, this period allowed the Hakka culture and the unique Tulou architecture to flourish.

Symbolic of the Hakka spirit, the Tulou features massive rammed earth walls up to four stories high that serve dual purposes (figure 2). These walls act as fortresses against external threats, while regulating the interior climate to promote a harmonious living environment. Inside, the structures are organized around courtyards with timber framing, assigning each family their home with shared corridors and balconies (figure 3). Constructed from natural materials like sand, stone, rice flour, and bamboo, destined to return to the earth, Tulous represent the Hakka people's respect for nature, sustainability, and community.

Centuries ago, this innovative housing typology emerged without architects, leveraging available

materials, and adapting to shifting social structures. The evolution of vernacular architecture, developed through indigenous knowledge and transforming livelihoods, now faces challenges. Many Tulou sites now face abandonment, traditional building techniques are being overlooked for modern alternatives that often disregard local environmental and cultural context. To understand this phenomenon, I will travel to six UNESCO-recognized sites in Fujian, China (figure 1)—*Chuxi Village, HongKeng Village, Gaobei Village, Shangban Village, Hekeng Village, and Dashiyang Village*—and visit 16 Tulous. This research will allow me, as a modern architect, to appreciate ancient structures and local materials amidst our quest for innovation.

The travel proposal aims to create an architectural encyclopedia that captures the essence of Tulou through photography and detailed drawings. I plan to explore the material and structural aspects, especially the rammed earth walls and timber frameworks, to understand their ecological impacts and architectural resilience. As well as transcripts of Interviews with local inhabitants, will delve into the communal life and traditions within Tulous, presenting a journey that celebrates an architectural heritage.



Figure 1, Site map

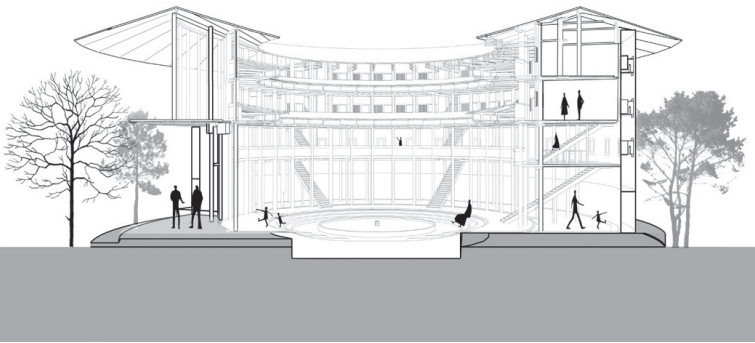


Figure 3, Typical Section of Tulou

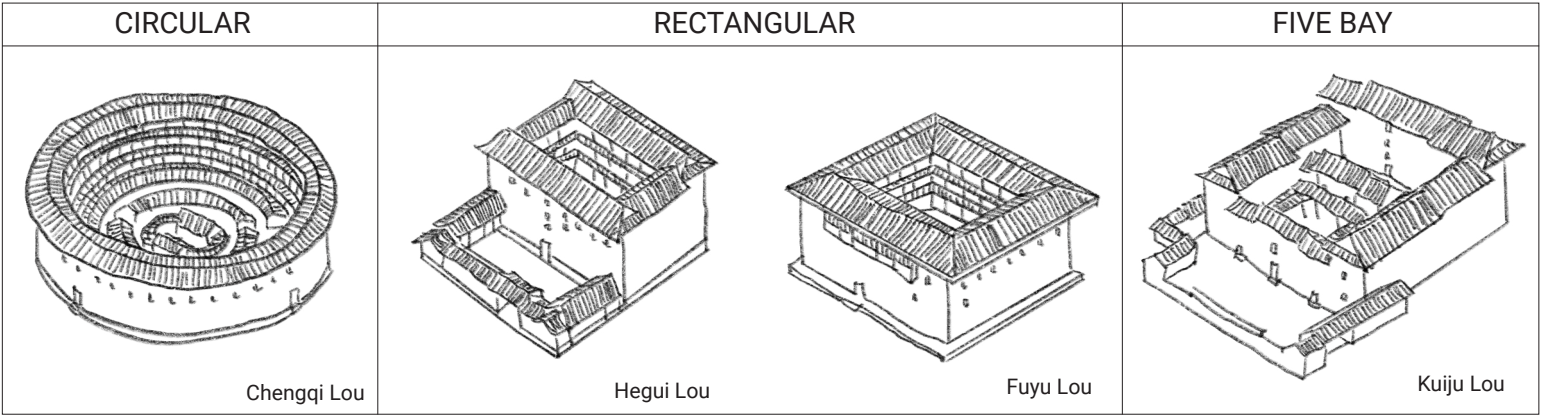


Figure 2, Types of Tulou

Itinerary

Chuxi Village	Day 1-5
<i>Jiqing Lou, Shengqing Lou</i>	
Hongkeng Village	Day 6-11
<i>Zhencheng Lou, Fuyu Lou, Kuiju Lou</i>	
Gaobei Village	Day 12-14
<i>Chengqi Lou</i>	
Shangban Village	Day 15-21
<i>Hechang Lou, Buyun Lou, Duanyun Lou, Zhengchang Lou, Wenchang Lou</i>	
Hekeng Village	Day 22-25
<i>Yangzhao Lou, Nanxun Lou, Shengqing Lou</i>	
Dashiyang Village	Day 25-31
<i>Hegui Lou, Huaiyuan Lou</i>	

Budget Estimation

Airfare	5000
Transportation (Car Rental & Train)	3500
Accomodation (\$132/Day)	4100
Guide and Admission	700
Food (\$22/Day)	700
Contingency & Misc	1000
TOTAL: 15000	